Finance & General Purposes

November 17th 2026

Introduction of Essential Car User Allowances and Revised Vehicle Arrangements

1. Summary

This report recommends that the Parish Council adopts the National Joint Council (NJC) Essential Car User Allowance arrangements for six members of staff whose duties require access to a vehicle, including staff undertaking standby duties and those who have previously relied upon the Council's green van.

The recommendation follows changes to the Council's operational vehicle arrangements, with the green van no longer being routinely available to support these duties during the daytime because it is required for a significant food contract to be delivered at the new MCC hub.

Historically, staff have assisted the Council by using their own vehicles with very limited reimbursement. No mileage has been claimed for journeys within Swindon, while journeys outside Swindon have normally been reimbursed for petrol costs only.

This arrangement has delivered considerable savings to the Council over several years. However, with fuel prices now reported to have reached approximately £1.77 per litre, and with the increasing need for employees to use their own vehicles, it is appropriate to introduce a modest and consistent allowance to recognise the costs associated with providing a vehicle for Council business.

The report also proposes that library books should, in future, be transported exclusively using the Council's minibus, rather than employees' private vehicles.

2. Background

The Council has historically benefited from the availability of its green van, which has supported a range of operational activities, collections, deliveries and other Council services.

Due to the operational requirements of a significant daytime food contract, the van will no longer be routinely available to support other Council activities during those hours.

Consequently, six members of staff, including those undertaking standby responsibilities, will increasingly be required to have their own vehicles available for Council business.

It is reasonable that staff who are required to provide their personal vehicles in support of essential Council services should receive a contribution towards the additional costs and responsibilities involved.

3. Current Mileage Arrangements and Historical Savings

For a considerable period, staff have supported the Council by making very limited claims for business travel.

The current informal arrangements have generally been:

- **Travel within Swindon:** No mileage expenses claimed.
- **Travel outside Swindon:** Reimbursement limited to petrol costs.
- **Use of private vehicles:** Staff have effectively absorbed vehicle wear and tear, depreciation, insurance and other running costs.

These arrangements have helped to reduce the Council's expenditure significantly over time.

The current HMRC approved mileage rate for privately owned cars and vans is 55p per mile for the first 10,000 business miles, reducing to 25p per mile thereafter.

The Council has therefore benefited from staff choosing not to claim mileage at these benchmark rates.

With fuel costs increasing, and greater reliance now being placed on employees' personal vehicles, continuing the existing informal arrangements is becoming less sustainable.

4. Proposed NJC Essential Car User Allowance

The NJC Green Book provides arrangements for employees whose duties make it essential for them to have a motor vehicle available for work.

The essential user allowance recognises the requirement to have a private vehicle available for Council business, rather than solely reimbursing individual journeys.

The following annual lump-sum rates are published by local authorities operating NJC-related car allowance arrangements:

Engine capacity	Monthly payment
451–999cc	£70.50
1,000–1,199cc	£80.25
1,200cc and above	£103.25

These figures are provided as the proposed basis for the Council's scheme, subject to confirmation of the applicable NJC or locally agreed rates.

The allowance would be paid monthly through payroll to qualifying staff.

The intention is to provide a modest contribution towards the cost of maintaining access to a suitable vehicle for Council purposes, particularly where staff are required to respond to operational needs or remain available for standby duties.

5. Staff Affected and Financial Implications

The proposed arrangements would affect **six members of staff**.

The actual cost would depend on the engine capacities of the vehicles used by the six employees, it is estimated for the remining part of 2026/27 a cost of £3,550 for the rest of the year and £6,300 for 2027/28.

Library Book Deliveries

As part of the revised arrangements, it is proposed that the transportation of library books should be undertaken using the Council's minibus.

This would provide a consistent approach to library deliveries and avoid unnecessary reliance upon employees' private vehicles for transporting books.

The minibus would therefore become the designated vehicle for this activity, subject to appropriate scheduling, driver availability, insurance and operational requirements.

7. Benefits to the Council

The proposed arrangements would:

- Ensure fairer treatment of employees required to use their own vehicles for Council business.
- Recognise the additional responsibility placed upon staff undertaking standby duties.
- Provide a consistent framework for vehicle allowances rather than relying on informal arrangements.
- Recognise the significant financial savings staff have historically provided by not claiming full business mileage costs.
- Support continuity of essential Council services following the reduced availability of the green van.
- Increase use of the underused minibus.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that FGP

1. **Approves the introduction of an Essential Car User Allowance** based on the NJC Green Book arrangements for the six identified members of staff who are required to have a private vehicle available for Council duties, including standby responsibilities and duties previously supported by the green van.
2. **Adopts the proposed annual allowance rates** of £846, £963 and £1,239 according to the applicable vehicle engine-capacity bands, subject to confirmation of the relevant NJC and locally agreed provisions.
3. **Authorises monthly payment** of the applicable allowance through the Council's payroll arrangements, subject to appropriate employment, insurance and tax requirements.
4. **Approves the minibus as the designated vehicle for library book deliveries**, with these deliveries no longer routinely undertaken using employees' private cars.

5. **Delegates implementation of the revised arrangements** to the appropriate authorised officer, with the necessary amendments to staff expenses procedures and operational vehicle scheduling.
6. **Notes the significant historical savings** achieved through staff voluntarily absorbing the cost of local Council journeys and claiming petrol costs only for journeys outside Swindon.